

Ashes to Ashes by Writing Tired

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Summary: Losing someone you love is never easy

Ashes to Ashes

It's been far too long since I posted anything, so what better way to return than with another heart-wrenching sad story?

WARNING: SEASON THREE SPOILERS BELOW

I knew I was going to be writing something sad after what happened in the finale, and it turned into this short little one-shot. There are other things I've been working on since my last post, I just haven't felt they were up to my standards to post, which is why I've been on an extended hiatus. Season three dropping just gave me an opportunity to do what I do best, tug at the heartstrings...

"...for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," The priest reads, and then looks up from his bible upon the solemn black-clad crowd before him. "Today we lay to rest not just a man, but a friend, a father, and a hero. One who gave his life in service of the people he loved, and leaves behind a grateful community, and a loving daughter."

His words ring emptily in the ears of that daughter, standing at the front of the crowd, her boyfriend on one side of her and her new parent on the other. Her nails are digging into her boyfriend's hand, but he wouldn't say anything about it even if he felt it. It takes all the strength she has to stay standing, the tears flowing unabated down her face.

When the coffin lowers into the earth, it's a hollow sense of closure to her. There's no body inside to lay to rest, there was no body *left* to lay to rest. The man that had taken her in from the cold, given her a home, and even made her his family...not even enough left to say goodbye to.

For a while, she hadn't even been able to look at Joyce, or Will. Joyce had turned the keys that killed her father, and Will had gotten his mother back in the end. She knew it wasn't really their fault, but every time she saw them it threw Hopper's death right in her face.

"Do you want to go inside?" Mike asks, the crowd behind them starting to make their way there. "We can stay too, whatever you want to do."

El tries to form some semblance of words, but it just starts another wave of tears. She couldn't spare the energy to move her feet if she wanted to, all of it trying to keep her from breaking down entirely.

"There are so many things I never knew I wanted to say to him, until now," Mike continues, not wanting to push El to speak. "I only ever complained and yelled at him. I wish I could have apologized for all of that, or at least thanked him, for everything he did for you."

El nods, her lower lip trembling too much to speak.

"If he hadn't taken you in, I might never have seen you again," He says, the corners of his mouth pulling up in a strained smile. "He never did seem to like me, but I guess I should have expected it. What dad *really* likes their daughter's boyfriend?" El manages a small cough in place of laughing, the action far beyond her abilities right now. "Still, if it meant he was still here, I'd listen to a thousand of his rules, even the crazy ones."

El finally can't take any more, breaking down into a new round of sobs. Mike pulls her against him, hugging her as tight as he can manage. All things considered, he's been a pretty terrible boyfriend, so he's got a lot of catching up to do.

"What do I do?" El manages to choke out between sobs.

Mike squeezes her tighter, not really knowing what to say, but knowing he should say something.

"We do what he would want us to do," He finally answers, rubbing small circles on El's back. "We keep going, one day at a time, all of us."

"How?" She sobs, her tears soaking into Mike's dress clothes, though he doesn't seem to notice in the slightest.

"Together," He tells her, as comfortingly as he can muster. "And I'll make you a promise. Whenever you need me, tonight, tomorrow, and

until the end of time, I'll be there. It doesn't matter where, or when, I'll find a way."

"C-can you st-stay tonight?" El asks, managing to reign in her sobs enough to put the words together.

"Nothing can keep me away," Mike promises, holding her tightly against him. "Let's leave the door open though, three inches."

I hope this helps give a little bit of closure to Hopper's untimely demise (though it may not be so if he's the American from the post credits scene), as well as to some of the drama between him and Mike.

I have a lot of problems with the way season three went, despite loving it overall, so you may see more of me in the coming weeks as I try to flesh out some of my issues. However, I do want to keep my standards for quality, so it may also be quite some time before we see each other again. Whichever it may be, I wish everyone luck adjusting to the changes season three has brought!

Thanks for reading!